Africa Review of Books / Revue africaine des Livres

Tribute to a Committed Intellectual

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Let the People Speak: Tanzania Down the Neo-Liberal Path

by Issa G. Shivji

CODESRIA, 2006, xiii+303pp., ISBN: 2-88078-183-0 (pbk)

All the essays in this collection engage with the interests of the local audience. They address the terms of such an engagement beyond those set by the state, politicians or intellectuals eager to operate within a neo-liberal framework while serving public dogma. There is no doubt therefore on whether the book is educative. Parts I (on multi-party politics) and VI (on the road to neo-liberalism) flag the goals of this book. In Part I, Shivji critically engages the Report of the Presidential Commission on Party System chaired by Chief Justice Francis Nyalali (Nyalali Report) while in Part VI he examines the implications of Tanzania’s road to neo-liberalism for, among others, industry, labour, urban housing, and public administration. The first section illustrates a second primitive accumulation of wealth in Africa; education, which has not only undermined relevance and quality by orienting schooling towards a ‘mimicking rather than thinking’ culture (pp. 161, 192) but also turned intellectuals into policy ideologues and ‘globalisers’ errant boys (p. 176); and trade and agriculture, where the land tenure system has been distorted and community systems of resolving land disputes have been undermined - all in the name of subjecting farm workers to market logic, just, fair and equitable and therefore legitimate’ (p. 53).

Part III focuses on the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar crafted in 1964. Shivji notes that the Achille beel of Tan-
\n尼亚的共同存在的唯一合法的渠道，但也可以通过思想性渠道来实现的。Shivji argues that this can be done by promoting educational reforms that emphasize the need for students to think critically and creatively. The book also discusses the role of politics in Tanzania and the challenges that the country faces in implementing democratic reforms. It highlights the importance of a strong and independent media in promoting democratic values and practices.

In both parts of the book, neo-liberalism is dissected. Viewed as an ideology that mutilated our perceptions of democracy by redefining the role of politics to that of a business rather than people-driven, it proceeds by placing the Conceptions of the legitimacy of constitutions, institutionalism and the democratic political system in an overall context of policy-making. The book highlights the role of the state in guiding the political process and the need for a strong civil society in promoting democratic values.

On the contrary, the reality of this kind of pluralist politics is that people are forced to choose on the basis of personalities rather than party policies. Shivji notes that in many countries, including Tanzania, the difference between parties is more obvious in their rhetoric than in their policies. The book also highlights the role of the media in promoting democratic values and the need for a strong civil society in promoting democratic values.

In conclusion, Let the People Speak provides a comprehensive analysis of the political and economic challenges that Tanzania faces in implementing democratic reforms. It highlights the role of the state in guiding the political process and the need for a strong civil society in promoting democratic values. The book also discusses the role of the media in promoting democratic values and the need for a strong civil society in promoting democratic values.
There are many more themes covered in this study than can be ably summarised in this review. The one area, however, where the usefulness of this study can be measured is how well it brings together three themes of paramount concern not just to Tanzania but also to Africa. These themes are citizenship, pan-Africanity and the required social vision that bridges them. Tanzania occupies a special place on the issue of vision. As Shivji shows in Part VII, Ujamaa was a radical nationalist ideology that cemented people together regardless of ethnicity or race. Thus, underlying Tanzania’s notion of citizenship was a social vision that inspired unity and equality across diversities. Shivji is aware that Tanzania may not have achieved equality among people, but there was a vision that gave people the hope for the eventual attainment of equality. The dismantling of Ujamaa with the onset of neo-liberal ‘marketisation’ of politics opened the way for politicisation of these identities. The negative results are there for all to see.

Shivji extends this analysis to the question of pan-Africanism which he contrasts with the dangerous forces of imperialism. Pan-Africanism was driven by two main currents: nationalism and continental/Diasporic unity. African nationalism was indeed a repudiation of European imperialism. It was founded on and driven by a desire to re-humanise African people. If the attainment of independence meant national sovereignty for and humanity of the people, the debt trap in Africa has represented a threat to this sovereignty and humanity. Though the essays in Part X focus on the debilitating debt crisis, showing how Tanzania often substitutes the provision of basic human needs for debt repayment (pp. 277-286), they constitute a basis for a good discussion on a key principle of pan-Africanist ideology, that is, national sovereignty. The implications of this discussion for Africa are many; and these essays have greater resonance with the wider African debt predicament than the author was able to capture.

In conclusion, it is important to return to the theme of social vision, hope and self-reliance which run through this book and illuminate Shivji’s convictions. Citing Mwalimu Nyerere, Shivji illustrates the significance of social vision in assuring people of a hopeful future. That hopeful future, based on the self-reliance of a sovereign nation-state, was the cornerstone of Tanzania’s history after the Arusha Declaration. Neo-liberalism has deflated that hope and allowed an otherwise dormant volcano to erupt into social upheavals - an eruption that is, above all, driven by inequality and poverty. ‘Peace,’ Nyerere argued, ‘is born of hope, when hope is gone there will be social upheaval’ (p.224). In a nutshell, the single most important lesson that one takes away from this enthralling collection for Africa is the urgent need to re-enact a new social vision for the African people that is based on the idea of self-reliance but anchored in a pan-African ideology. These two have been central to Shivji’s scholarship and to his commitment to the people of Africa. Shivji can still walk proudly knowing that his service at the ‘Hill’ was not in vain and that his voice still reverberates across the African terrain.

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